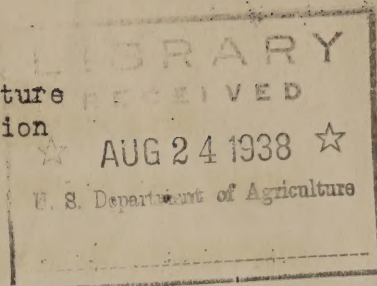


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1938

United States Department of Agriculture
Agricultural Adjustment Administration
Washington, D. C.



The Facts on Irrigated Land

Facts in this statement were compiled by
the Agricultural Adjustment Administration

The impression prevails among some farmers that the Federal Government is bringing many millions of acres of new lands into production through irrigation. They therefore ask: "Why should we curtail the production of wheat, corn, cotton, and other soil-depleting crops of which excess quantities are being produced, when increased plantings of such crops may be taking place on the irrigated areas?"

In 1937, after the Federal Government had been building reclamation projects for thirty-five years, the land in crops receiving water from Federal enterprises totaled 3,043,000 acres, or less than 1 percent of the total land in crops in the country that year. Moreover, this figure included 1,342,072 acres already irrigated by private projects which, under the Warren Act, merely purchased additional water from Federal storage reservoirs, so that the 1,700,928 acres actually a part of the Federal projects represented only half of 1 percent of the 341,000,000 acres harvested in 1937. Approximately 17,000,000 acres of other crop land were also irrigated in 1937 but the water for these was furnished by private, cooperative, city, or state irrigation enterprises. The irrigation projects of the Indian Service furnish an adequate water supply to about 500,000 acres of land.

The only new land brought under irrigation by Federal projects during the past five years has been on projects authorized and started before 1933.

With reference to the future, the Bureau of Reclamation recently released data showing that only about 1,000,000 acres of additional lands are expected to be brought under irrigation by 1948 by reclamation projects now under construction, or which have been under construction during the past four years.

Grand Coulee Irrigation Project To Be Finished in 1964

Only 26,804 of the 1,000,000 acres mentioned are to be brought under irrigation during 1938, 26,123 in 1939, 20,000 in 1940, 20,000 in 1941, and 56,800 in 1942. In 1943, when the Grand Coulee Dam-Columbia Basin project is expected to be able to furnish water for its first unit of land, consisting of 150,000 acres, the total additional lands brought in will be 200,000 acres. Thereafter, until 1948, the additional acres, including Grand Coulee units, will run as follows: 1944, 110,000 acres; 1945, 116,000; 1946, 100,000; 1947, 90,000; 1948, 85,000. After 1948, the Grand Coulee will continue to bring under irrigation 50,000 acres annually until the project is completed in 1964. The area in the Columbia Basin for which the Grand Coulee will furnish water is the major unimproved area in the United States subject to irrigation.

Construction of the main canal on the All-American Canal, California (Boulder Canyon project), which was authorized December 21, 1928 and which is now nearing completion, and of the Coachella branch canal, which has yet to be undertaken, will provide water for the irrigation of 521,000 acres of the Imperial Valley and 152,930 acres in the Coachella Valley. The Imperial Valley lands are now, and have been since 1901, irrigated by the Imperial Canal, a private enterprise. About 16,000 acres in the Coachella Valley are now irrigated by pumping from wells, leaving approximately 137,000 acres of additional lands to come in. According to the Bureau of Reclamation, the

canal to the Coachella Valley will be completed in 1942, but construction of a lateral distribution system has not been authorized. It is believed it will probably be several years after the completion of the canal in 1942 before the entire area in the Coachella Valley is under irrigation.

Many Thousands of Homeless Farmers Need Farms

New farm opportunities are urgently needed today for the many thousands of families driven from their farms in the Great Plains by the droughts of the past few years. The major function of Federal reclamation in the national land-use program is to provide such opportunities. Commissioner of Reclamation John C. Page has stated, however, that the present construction program cannot make new lands available fast enough to take care of the demand on the part of these unfortunate families, and that even if the Grand Coulee Dam-Columbia Basin project, by far the largest of the reclamation projects, were already finished it would provide homes for less than half of the farm families forced out of the Great Plains alone. The Farm Security Administration recently estimated that 58,400 families have migrated into seven far-western states from drought areas. It is the opinion of the Farm Security Administration that almost all of these drought immigrants could, under favorable farming conditions and with adequate assistance, once again become self-supporting.

The acres now irrigated by Federal projects support directly 900,000 persons living on farms and in towns on the projects so that most of the food and feed crops produced on these acres are needed for local consumption. These irrigated areas, moreover, are markets for foodstuffs, such as pork and pork products, from the midwest and other sections of the country.

Irrigated Acreage Largely Devoted to Feed Crops

Hay and forage crops are the principal crops, from the standpoint

of acreage, grown on the irrigated lands of the West. In 1936 approximately 50 percent of the acreage cropped on the Federal reclamation projects was devoted to these crops, chiefly alfalfa. Approximately 11 percent of the acres were in wheat, about 10 percent in cotton, and less than 4 percent in corn. The remaining acreage of about 25 percent was in sugar beets, barley, oats, vegetables, fruits, and other crops. Just how insignificant, from a competitive standpoint, is the wheat, cotton, and corn production on these projects is realized when it is known that in the drought year 1936 the wheat crop harvested on the irrigated acres of these projects totaled only 4,374,435 bushels, that of cotton 176,449 bales, and that of corn, 1,730,232 bushels. The Federal reclamation enterprises' wheat crop represented less than seven-tenths of 1 percent, that of cotton about 1-1/3 percent, and that of corn considerably less than one-tenth of 1 percent, of the total United States production of these commodities that year. It should not be overlooked that farmers in these areas also take part in the AAA farm program.

Many Reclamation Projects Have Several Purposes

Many of the Federal enterprises are "multiple-purpose" projects. The Grand Coulee Dam, for instance, is being built for hydro-electric power, and to improve navigation, as well as to irrigate lands. The Central Valley (California) project has, besides the purposes mentioned, also that of providing protection from salt water intrusion into delta lands. This enterprise, like several others, is known as a "rescue project" because it is intended to bring additional water to areas that formerly enjoyed an ample supply of water. The very existence of some of these areas is threatened by the lack of sufficient water.

SUMMARY

It can be seen, therefore, that the amount of land brought under irrigation by the Federal Government in the past, or which is likely to be brought under in the future, is relatively small, that much of it was previously irrigated, that the principal crops grown on the irrigated lands, from an acreage standpoint, are hay and forage, while the staple crops of which there are exportable surpluses in other regions are produced in very small amounts, that the families on the Federal projects are important consumers of farm products from the Midwest and other parts of the country, and finally that the lands being brought under irrigation by the Federal Government are greatly needed to provide new farm opportunities for many thousands of dispossessed farmers wandering throughout the West.

Inasmuch as a large part of it was unproductive and idle land no mention has thus far been made of the approximately 9,100,000 acres of land acquired by the Resettlement Administration for conversion to other uses including grazing, forestry, recreation, and wildlife conservation. However, more than 1,000,000 acres of this land was in crops. The secretary of Agriculture, under authority of the Bankhead-Jones Act, has approved land utilization projects involving the purchase of approximately 2,200,000 acres more, located for the most part in the Great Plains. In these projects, marginal land or land not primarily suited to cultivation is being purchased in order to effect much needed programs of agricultural rehabilitation.

However, even were the Federal reclamation projects both unnecessary and a menace to farmers in other areas, it would still be imperative for those farmers to protect and improve the soil on their own farms. The AAA farm program enables them to do this by compensating them for planting fewer acres to soil-depleting crops and more acres to soil-conserving grasses and legumes.

